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CHARACTERS

SPEAKING CHARACTERS

DICAEOPOLIS of Cholleidae, a rustic
HERALD
GODSON, son of Lycinus, an immortal
AMBASSADOR returned from the King of Persia
PSEUDO-ARTABAS, the Persian King's "Eye"
THEORUS, a politician
DAUGHTER of Dicaeopolis
SLAVE of Euripides
EURIPIDES, the tragic poet
LAMACHUS, a general
MEGARIAN
GIRLS (two), daughters of the Megarian
INFORMER
THEBAN
NICARCHUS, another informer
SLAVE of Lamachus
DERCETES of Phyle, a farmer
BEST MAN
MESSENGER I (from the generals)
MESSENGER II (from the priest of Dionysus)
MESSENGER III (from the battlefield)

MUTE CHARACTERS

OFFICERS of the Athenian Assembly
CITIZENS attending the Assembly
POLICEMEN policing the Assembly
AMBASSADORS returned from the King of Persia
EUNUCHS, two
THRACIAN MERCENARIES
XANTHIAS, slave of Dicaeopolis
SLAVES of Dicaeopolis
WIFE of Dicaeopolis
CHILDREN of Dicaeopolis
SOLDIERS under Lamachus
ISMENIAS, slave of the Theban
PIPERS from Thebes
MAID OF HONOR
DANCING-GIRLS, two

CHORUS

OLD MEN OF ACHARNAE, twenty-four

ACHARNIANS

PROLOGUE

(Dicaeopolis, Herald, Godson, Ambassador, Pseudo-Artabas, Theorus; Officers, Citizens, Policemen, Ambassadors, Eunuchs, Thracian Merceneries)

DICAEOPOLIS

How often have I chewed my heart with rage!
My pleasures? Very few; in fact just four.
My pains? Far more than all the grains of sand.
Let's try to recall a case of real euphoria.
I know! It's something my heart rejoiced to see:
that million-dollar fine coughed up by Cleon.*
That really gave me joy! I love the Knights
for that indictment: a banner day for Greece!
But then I had another pain, quite tragic:
I was waiting for a play by Aeschylus,*
then heard, "Theognis, bring your chorus on."*
Imagine how that shook up my poor heart!
Another joy was after Moschus played:
Dexitheus did some Theban country-tunes.*
But recently I died and went to hell,
when Chaeris played the Anthem on his flute.*
But never since I first began to wash

* 6 What had pleased Aristophanes, a personal enemy of Cleon (see Introduction), also pleases his hero. But the precise nature of the incident referred to in these lines is obscure. Ancient commentaries explain that some island allies had bribed the demagogue Cleon to argue for a reduction of their property taxes or tribute and that the Knights, motivated by an old grudge, had made him "cough up" the money. If so, the case cannot have gone to trial: conviction for bribery would have resulted in a more severe penalty and at least some interruption of Cleon's political career. Cleon probably made restitution to avoid trial by the procedure known as *probole*. Some scholars think that the incident is not historical at all but took place in a comedy, perhaps Aristophanes's *Babylonians* (see lines 377 ff.), but that is very unlikely, since the Knights do not seem to have played a role in any comedy before *Knights*: see 299 ff., *Knights* 507 ff.

* 10 The great tragic poet, who had died thirty years before, was a favorite of older men like Dicaeopolis, nostalgic for the empire-building years after the Persian wars. The patriotic and inspirational qualities of Aeschylus' plays are dramatized in Aristophanes's *Frogs*.

* 11 The comic poets nicknamed this "frigid" tragic poet "Snow".

* 14 Two noted *kithara* (lyre) players; Dicaeopolis's preference was determined by Dexitheus' choice of song.

* 16 The comic poets considered Chaeris a bad flautist and lyre-player.